



Exotic Newcastle Disease

Facts

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What is Exotic Newcastle Disease?

It is a rapidly spreading virus that affects all birds. One of several types of Newcastle diseases, Exotic Newcastle is one of the most infectious diseases of poultry in the world. It occurs in Central and South America, the Middle East, and most of Europe, Africa and Asia. The severity of the disease varies with the type of virus. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Exotic Newcastle is so virulent that many birds die without showing any clinical signs. A death rate of almost 100 percent can occur in unvaccinated poultry flocks. The disease can infect and cause death even in vaccinated poultry.

Is Exotic Newcastle Disease a threat to humans?

No. It does not threaten public health or affect the safety of poultry and egg products.



Has Exotic Newcastle Disease been found in Washington?

No. However, bird owners should take steps to protect their flocks. Game fowl tend to move within states and between states outside of the normal animal movement safeguards and without regard to animal health requirements. To keep the disease out of Washington, do not accept shipments of birds from locations known to have Exotic Newcastle Disease. Please report shipments of birds from those areas, and signs of the disease, to the state veterinarian at (360) 902-1878.

What are the signs of Exotic Newcastle Disease?

After an incubation period of 2-15 days, it affects the respiratory, nervous and digestive systems. Infected birds may cough, sneeze or gasp. These abnormal respiratory sounds are often followed by other signs, such as drooping wings, dragging legs, twisting of the head and neck, depression, lack of appetite and paralysis. Some birds may have diarrhea and swelling of the head. Young chickens are more susceptible and show signs sooner than older ones. In laying flocks, egg production may stop. Eggs from infected flocks may be abnormal in color, shape or surface and egg whites may be watery.

Why is WSDA creating permanent rules to protect birds against Exotic Newcastle Disease?

The virus is extremely contagious. The last outbreak in the U.S. was detected in October 2002 in backyard flocks in California. It moved into commercial egg-laying facilities in that state and backyard flocks in New Mexico, Texas, Nevada and Arizona. Today, the outbreak has been contained in all but six California counties. Veterinarians and health inspectors are doing surveys and sampling there to ensure there is no more disease. There have been no new cases since May 2003.

How is Exotic Newcastle Disease spread?

It is spread primarily through contact between healthy birds and the bodily discharges of infected birds. Virus is present in exhaled air, droppings, contaminated water or food, eggs laid during illness and all parts of the carcass. Birds can also be infected by contact with contaminated people, vehicles, equipment, wild birds and rodents.

What can bird owners do to protect their birds?

Do not purchase birds that are smuggled into the U.S. These birds are not quarantined and tested by USDA and they may carry Exotic Newcastle or other diseases. Pet birds, especially parrots, may shed virus for more than a year without showing signs of illness.

- Ask suppliers to certify that birds are legally imported or raised in the U.S., healthy prior to shipment, and will be transported in new or thoroughly disinfected containers.
- Maintain records of all sales and shipments of flocks. Isolate all newly purchased birds for at least 30 days.
- Restrict movement of personnel between new and old birds.
- Follow the biosecurity measures for poultry producers listed on page two of this fact sheet.

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What biosecurity measures can poultry producers take to protect their flocks?

- Keep poultry houses locked and allow entry only to essential personnel.
- Workers should wear clean or disposable coveralls, head covers and boots, or plastic boots that can be disinfected.
- Do not use equipment from another farm in your poultry house or on your farm. Disinfect and restrict the movement of vehicles entering and leaving your farm.
- If dealers visit, insist that crates and trucks are clean. Never allow a dealer's crates to be placed in your poultry house.
- Do not allow animals into poultry buildings. Work with a pest control professional to keep wild birds and rodents out.
- Use a disinfectant footbath before entering or leaving the poultry house or egg room. Change the footbath daily.
- Avoid visiting other poultry operations. Do not wear poultry house clothing and footwear away from the farm.
- Do not attend auctions where poultry are sold. Do not bring birds from slaughter channels back to the farm.
- Clean and disinfect poultry houses between each lot of birds.
- Incinerate, compost, render or bury dead birds. Never dispose of them in fields and do not allow them to pile up.
- Do not spread droppings from any flock that has experienced illness and mortality within the previous three weeks, unless the droppings have been composted properly.
- Submit sick, dying and dead birds to a diagnostic laboratory whenever unusual disease occurs.
- For information about Washington State University's Avian Health and Food Safety Lab in Puyallup, call Dr. A. Singh Dhillon at (253) 445-4537.

What should I do if I suspect my birds have Exotic Newcastle Disease?

Sick or dead birds must be tested to confirm Exotic Newcastle Disease because it can mimic other bird diseases. State or federal veterinarians will work with private veterinarians at no charge to the owner to collect samples for testing. Call the state Department of Agriculture at (360) 902-1878 or the U.S. Department of Agriculture at (360) 753-9430.

Where can I get more information?

- WSDA's Web site at <http://www.wa.gov/agr/FoodAnimal/AnimalHealth/ENDdefault.htm>
 - USDA's Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/enc/exoticnc.html>
 - California Department of Food and Agriculture Web site at http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/Newcastle_info.htm
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